

Best Practices

Library Development Accreditation Program

2025-2027

Note: The following best practices are intended to provide additional context and insight for a standard. Libraries wishing to speak with a member of the NEKLS staff regarding any standard are encouraged to do so by calling the NEKLS office – 785.838.4090.

Standard #4: *All new library trustees participate in a formal orientation upon appointment to the library board.*

The overarching goal of this standard is to ensure new library trustees (“trustee”) are set up for success as they join the library board. Do not assume that the new trustee has prior knowledge of how the library operates. Elements of a solid orientation:

- Trustee binder that includes key documents. (May also be on a password-protected trustee webpage or provided on a flash drive.)
 - Welcome letter from the board chair
 - Board roster with name, term and contact information of each board member
 - Current year budget
 - Most recent board meeting packet
 - Employee handbook
 - Other library policies
 - Strategic plan
- Tour of the library building – inside and out – with the library director. This allows the new trustee to see the public and staff spaces of the library and learn about any maintenance or accessibility concerns.
- A follow-up meeting with the library director and/or board chair. This allows the new trustee time to absorb the contents of the trustee binder, reflect on the library tour and formulate questions for the follow-up meeting.

Upon request, NEKLS will provide an in-person orientation to new trustees on the statutory nature of their role, but this should merely complement a library-specific orientation provided by the library.

Standard #6: *Liability insurance for the library is maintained by the library board or the library's parent government body (city, township or county), and a copy of the current insurance policy is on file at the library.*

General liability insurance provides broad protections for the library, staff and patrons, including protection against claims that the library caused bodily injury or property damage. Libraries should have liability insurance.

In many cases, the local governing body (e.g. city, township) owns the library building and the library board is essentially a tenant. It is important for these two parties (city and library) to agree in writing on which entity is responsible for maintaining which insurance. Liability insurance is one essential form of coverage, of course, but also insuring the building and the contents of the building. Often, a city will agree to insure the building and the library agrees to insure the contents. (For district libraries, it is more likely that the library owns its own building and will need to pay for all insurance.) Libraries need to make sure that liability insurance is not overlooked.

Standard #25: *The library board annually conducts a written evaluation of the library director's performance.*

The library director is the sole employee who reports directly to the library board. In fact, Kansas state statute lists the powers and duties of the library board, including:

K.S.A. 12-1225(d): to employ a librarian and such other employees as the board deems necessary and to remove them and to fix their compensation

The annual written evaluation is an important tool for the library board and for the employee (library director). It can be used to help inform the board's thinking about a wage increase for the director; it may highlight the need for a performance improvement plan; and it can help the director to better understand areas for improvement. The board may also wish to use the annual evaluation conversation as an opportunity to identify and document mutually-agreed upon goals for the next fiscal year.

In addition, the annual performance review is an excellent time to review the director's job description and make necessary adjustments.

As with all employee written evaluations, the employee (in this case, library director) should sign receipt of the evaluation. This signature should be preceded by a statement such as:

By signature, I acknowledge that I discussed this evaluation with my supervisor and reviewed the evaluation; it does not imply agreement. I understand that I may receive a copy of this appraisal upon request.

The very end of the written evaluation should include the following statement to protect the library and remind all parties that Kansas is an at-will employment state:

***** The <insert library name> is an at-will employer, meaning that either the Library or employee can end the employment relationship at any time and for any or no reason. The evaluation reflected in this document does not alter the parties' at-will relationship.*****

Standard #26: *An annual salary increase is provided to the library director, subject to the annual performance evaluation.*

There is an expression that an organization is only as strong as its most valuable asset: its people. All staff are important to the success of a library and this success begins with the library director. NEKLS has observed countless instances where a library has excelled or stumbled under the leadership of a library director. Hiring and supporting a new director is an investment of time and funds and, once a library board has a strong director, it is important to retain them.

Compensation is a leading factor in employee retention. Library boards are encouraged to compensate the library director in a manner that is competitive within the regional library market. In some instances, this may prove difficult in relation to what the job market bears in your community. Regardless the circumstances, NEKLS believes it is important for a library director with a positive annual performance evaluation to receive a salary increase each year.

Three resources to assist in considering a wage increase:

Living wage calculator by Massachusetts Institute of Technology: <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>

*"We developed the Living Wage Calculator to help individuals, communities, employers, and others estimate the local wage rate that a full-time worker requires to cover the costs of their family's basic needs where they live. Explore the **living wage** in your county, metro area, or state for 12 different family types."*

Consumer Price Index by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/>

Public library survey, State Library of Kansas: <https://kslib.info/1131/Statistical-Data-Reports>

Select the most recent reporting year and then download the Salary Survey (either PDF or XLSX format)

Standard #34: *The library provides materials, services and programming to patrons of all ages as appropriate for their community.*

The library should prioritize inclusivity and community relevance in the provision of materials, services, and programming to patrons of all ages. This best practice emphasizes a proactive approach to understanding and meeting the diverse needs and interests of the community, ensuring equitable access and engagement for patrons across different age groups and demographics.

Libraries should understand the needs of their community through regular assessments or surveys and engage with individuals across the demographics of their communities to get feedback. Materials offered by libraries, as well as the programming and other services, should both act as a mirror for individuals in the community as well as a window into other lifestyles and beliefs that may be underrepresented in the community. Libraries should also ensure that equity is in mind when creating programs and services so that all community members can access them without barriers.

Standard #37: *The library board has a current written strategic plan. Assistance with library planning is available from NEKLS. Library will provide a copy of the strategic plan to NEKLS in electronic format.*

The library should have a current written strategic plan to guide its operations, services, and initiatives. Collaboration with NEKLS is available if needed, additionally, the library should share the strategic plan with NEKLS in electronic format to facilitate ongoing support and consultation.

The strategic plan should be reviewed annually and updated as necessary, with the board getting a chance to hear how the plan is being implemented in the library on a regular basis. Board members should be closely involved in the creation and revisions of any strategic plan the library adopts in order to ensure the plan reflects the mission and vision of the library as established by the board. The plan can either be aimed toward a 3 to 5 year future or it can be created as an evergreen document that is formally reviewed and updated every year to reflect the goals that have been achieved and new opportunities that arise.

The plan should be used to inform the library's community about what the library plans to do for them in the future as well as to inform marketing plans and technology plans and other documents that help the library and community grow.